

PROGRESS OF LATE

AMONGST THE PEOPLE CALLED **METHODISTS.**

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE
OUT-LINES OF A CONSTITUTION.

HUMBLY RECOMMENDED TO THE SERIOUS CON-
SIDERATION OF THE PREACHERS AND PEOPLE
LATE IN CONNECTION WITH MR. WALKER.

BY ALEXANDER KILHAM,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

(*Founder of the Methodist New Connexion*)
Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. 5. 21.

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PREFACE.

IT may be supposed by many of our brethern, that I have taken too much upon myself, in offering this pamphlet to the public ; but, I hope, they will *candidly examine* the steps which have led to it, before they pass sentence against me. I shall give a brief sketch of the different occurrences which have engaged me to act the part I have done ; leaving every person that reads these pages, at *full liberty*, to acquit or condemn me, as his own judgment shall determine.

In the beginning of the year 1785, I went to preach at Skendalby, near Spilsby, in Lincolnshire. The Revd. Ed. B——ry, with another clergyman, came to hear me. After I had asserted the words of St. Paul, “The Spirit bears witness with the spirit of every true christian, that he is a child of God”, the Rev. E. B——ry stopped me, and denied the assertion. We disputed this, and other points before his parishoners, near an hour ; and when he could not obtain his end, he promised to send me a book, written by a *very learned bishop*, which was to convince me of my error, and lead me into the good and right way. Before he left the house, I intreated him to allow me to finish my discourse, before the people were dismissed. He granted my request, and we peaceably concluded our worship.

But when he had consulted with the other clergyman upon the subject, he was determined to exercise his authority as a magistrate ; and therefore declared, the first preacher that went to that place, should be taken up. He also declared, if it had not been for his brother, at whose house I then resided, he would have sent me to Lincoln castle. We got the house licenced immediately. In a few weeks there was a quarter sessions in Spilsby, where I attended to take the oaths, which are necessary to qualify a dissenting minister for the pulpit. When I went to the bar, Mr B——ry was one of the magistrates on the bench, and *violently* opposed me, in a very crowded assembly. He *pretended*, we were neither churchmen nor dissenters ; and

therefore had no right to the benefits of the toleration act &c. We disputed for half an hour in the town's house, before all that were present. I wanted a licence as a methodist dissenter. He would not allow me to take the oaths under *any* profession. Another clergyman, who was with him on the bench, (and who wished we might go and perplex him, as they were a little at variance,) took out a great book, and read the act of toleration to Mr B——ry. They then proposed to give me a licence as a dissenter, and on no other terms. Being forced to have it on this condition, I submitted; and then went peaceably to preach in Skendalby, where many heard the word of God with pleasure. From that time, I have considered myself a *real dissenter*.

Mr Fish, one of our preachers, entered into a warm contest with me, on my calling the methodists dissenters. For two years, we had a paper war on this subject. We exchanged long letters once a month, each of us striving to make good his own cause. He was so warm for the church, that he often attended afternoon prayers, in the places where he preached: and he condemned every preacher that did not reverence the establishment. At length, however, he *laid aside his prejudice*, was ordained as a dissenting minister, and went to the West Indies; where he preaches now with his gown and bands, to the great advantage of our cause.

Nothing very particular happened with me on this subject, till the year 1791. I was then closely besieged by the ruling elder of the Whitby society; who strove to force me into measures, which I could not in conscience submit to. He wished my wife might climb up 190 steps to the church, after she had laid in, and give the *parish priest* sixpence to say over a few prayers on her account, and the clerk one penny, for the trouble he might be at, in saying amen. As we had a public prayer meeting every Friday in our chapel at 12 o'clock, *with her hearty consent*, we praised God there for his mercies, pleaded with him for future blessing, and saved *sevenpence*, by doing our own work. He then strove to compel me to let the minister baptize our child, but in this he could not prevail.

Soon after the death of Mr Wesley, I answered the letter that was published from Hull, and sent it anonymous to Newcastle. The preachers, leaders, and stewards of that

that society, who were of the same sentiments, made a few slight alterations in it, and published it, with a postscript of their own. .

Contrary to my expectation, and against my desire, I was appointed to labour in Newcastle circuit, at the conference, in 1791. After Mr Cownley had received a second *abusive* letter from Mr G— (a leader of that society) he told me his mind was exercised with various things, which led him to determine not to open it. He gave me the letter, desiring, if I thought it was worthy of an answer, to write to Mr G—. I wrote him my mind freely on the subject. He replied. I answered his reply. He sent my answer back sealed up, as though it had never been opened; but *ungentely* took an imperfect copy before it was returned; which he afterwards published. He began the correspondence again, which I answered. After waiting a few weeks, *contrary to my knowledge, and without my consent*, he published all the letters which had passed on the subject, with a *very bitter* postscript of his own: and spread the pamphlet throughout the neighbourhood. As the letters did not contain my sentiments fully on the subjects in dispute, I wrote a pamphlet, called an address to the friends and members of the Newcastle Society, and published it early in the year 1792. Whoever reads the letters and the address, *with an unprejudiced mind*, will be *constrained to acknowledge*, that we had truth, and the scriptures of truth on our side.

I wrote many private letters on this subject before the conference returned: and a long answer to the printed letter from Leeds, signed by a number of the *Brethren and Sisters* of that place.

In July I was regularly summoned to attend the conference, to stand a trial, for writing my address to the Newcastle friends. My *prosecutors* and *persecutors*, passed by Messrs Bradburn and Thomas Taylor, though they both stood many circuits on the minutes before me, (because they were great men, and my opponents thought they could not so soon crush them,) and entered into a long examination of my *motives* and *conduct*. While I read an address to the conference, (which I am constrained to omit inserting here, for want of room,) most of the preachers were in tears. When they had tried me part of two days, they could not find a *single sentence* in the pamphlet,

but what Mr Bradburn proved to be true; yet they condemned it, as calculated to do mischief among our people. The Lord, however, graciously stood by me *through the whole trial*, and prevented me from being hurt by any of my enemies. Several of them soon embraced our sentiments, and have since that time been my steady friends.

I went voluntarily into Scotland to fill up a place, which afforded me all the religious privileges my heart could wish for. In the beginning of the year 1793, I had the principle hand in publishing a letter, signed T. ueman and Freeman. It was reprinted in Sunderland, and circulated extensively through our connexion. The same year I answered the letter published by the London trustees of the City Road Chapel, and replied to two letters which they sent me on the subject: none of these were ever printed.

Though I was exceedingly grieved on account of the illiberal sentiments that were published from the Leeds conference, yet I made no public reply to them. Many of us mourned in silence, and let answers to individuals suffice, who supported the sentiments of those letters. My time was taken up a good deal with the play-actors and others, who violently opposed a pamphlet, which I had written, on horse races, cards, attending the play-house, and dancing. The Lord, however, enabled me to put to flight, the armies of those aliens.

In 1794, I was appointed to attend the conference in Bristol. On my way, in London, I became acquainted with the designs of a convention of trustees, that were then assembled in the New-Chapel. In Bristol I wrote my mind freely to the conference upon the disputes that then agitated us; but when the letter was read, several persons clamoured for its *immediate destruction*. A majority of the conference were hurried hastily to condemn it to be torn in pieces by the president, but they have since had cause to repent of that hasty step. If my letter had been properly considered, it would have prevented our religious contest last year, and been attended with many other advantages. I have not room in this pamphlet to publish it. Several copies of it are in the hands of different friends.

When the war in Bristol had greatly agitated our connexion, I considered it my duty, to publish the letter, signed

ed Aquila and Priscilla. It was reprinted in Bristol, and sent to a number of places, that it might give a fair representation of some things, which had not then been sufficiently considered.

When Mr M——'s letter reached Aberdeen, (a few days after I had sent mine to the office,) I was very much grieved; and determined, if my way was made plain, to answer it. After much deliberation and prayer, I published the letter signed Martin Luther: my name was withheld from both these letters, *for no other reason*, than to prevent any of them from being sent back, and to prevent being ruined by the postage of letters, that would have been sent to me on account of them. For, many would have rebuked, reprov'd, admonished, cautioned, &c. I foresaw this evil, and hid myself from its influence,

I wrote the pamphlet signed Paul and Silas, several weeks before the conference. After advising with a few of my brethern, it was sent in Manchester, to the press. Mr Suter added, the observations, which begin at the 20 h page, and finish the pamphlet. It was given to the preachers the first day the conference met. I hope none of these labours have been in vain.

In the time of the conference, many of us refused to vote for different articles of pacification. We entered our protest against them at the time they were read. When we saw an appearance of some of our rulers being capable of two meanings, I drew up the following address to the conference, which was signed by 57 of the preachers. Many more would have signed it, if they had had an opportunity. Most of those that did sign, were *very respectable* men, as their names would testify, were I to publish them.

“ Honeured Fathers and Brethern.

“ We are *extreamly* sorry, that any thing should cause
 “ us to differ in sentiment, from a majority of the conference. We are *constrained* to do it, from a principle
 “ of truth and honesty. It appears to us, that no rule made
 “ in this house should be capable of bearing a double meaning. We are sorry to find an *appearance* of duplicity
 “ in some of our rules. We exceedingly object to the addition which is made to the first proposition of reconciliation, unless you add to it Messrs Thompson, Benson, and
 “ Bradburn's explanation of the word *separation*. If this
 “ be

"be not granted, we jointly enter our protest against that, and every other rule of the same nature. And intreat the preachers met in conference, to respect their character, by making their rules so explicit, that no person may misunderstand them. We are your affectionate brethren in the Gospel" &c.

Is there any thing in this address, but what *reason* and the *Bible* require? A clamour, however, was made against us, before it was read, and the president *actually suppressed it*, without its being publicly read to the preachers. Several cried out it was designed to divide us: and it was some time before they would cease complaining on this head. Does not this address breathe the spirit of the gospel, in advising the conference to make its rules and laws so explicit, that they may be known by all? And in recommending truth and honesty in all our measures? If this divide us, *what is it that keeps us together?* If our opposing brethren had suffered it to have been read, it is very probable, they would have been of a different mind.

By conversing with several of our most *sensible* and *pious* brethren in the ministry, on the necessity of having our matters better adjusted, I have been led to offer my sentiments upon different subjects. I have no design to *injure* the cause of methodism, or to lessen any of our brethren in the esteem of the people; but to prevail, *if possible*, on the preachers every where, to fix such a constitution, as shall unite us to our followers, in such bonds, as shall never be broken. This would lead us to labour comfortably in the vineyard of Christ, and constrain the world to acknowledge, that we have been with Jesus.

I make no apology for what I have done, But humbly intreat all that read these pages to believe, that I have *aimed* at glorifying God, and being useful to our connexion, in all that I have written. If I am deceived, I hope God will prevent me from continuing in that state.

May every blessing necessary for our future prosperity be granted to us in Christ Jesus! And may the people of every nation and tongue, share with us, in the blessings which are purchased by the blood of the everlasting covenant, that we and they may be happy, through the ages of eternity!

ALEXANDER KILHAM.

ALNWICK,
Sep. 14th 1795.

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THE
PROGRESS OF LIBERTY
AMONGST THE
METHODISTS.

IT is unnecessary to repeat what has been said to the honour of our father in the gospel, Mr Wesley. Persons of every denomination have owned that, he was a special instrument in the hands of the Lord, in reviving vital religion in these nations. And his enemies have been *obliged to acknowledge*, that his labours in the ministry, exceeded those of any other man, since the reformation: if not since the days of the apostles.

When the Lord crowned his ministry with abundant success, he generously accepted of the help of lay preachers, after the clergy had refused to come forward to assist him. He was conscious, that Jesus Christ, his Lord and Master, had made choice of poor illiterate fishermen, and others, to spread the good tidings of salvation through the nations. He was happy in beholding the labours of the men he had excepted to help him in the ministry, owned of God in the conversion of many sinners.

This great and good man, enlarged the sphere of his *glorious course* every year; and had the happiness of seeing thousands of miriads brought unto God, by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. New places were opened,—societies raised up,—local and travelling preachers called to labour in the vineyard of Christ,—and many, very many, were constrained to testify, that God was with him. National churches and dissenters of every denomination, were provoked to emulation, and great good abounded to multitudes, that would neither join our societies, nor even stoop to hear the doctrines which he and his brethern preached. See Oliver's defence of methodism.

Notwithstanding Mr Wesley's great attachment to the national church, he shewed a liberality of sentiment, that is hardly to be met with in any other person. When he first founded societies in different places, he accepted
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persons of different persuasions, to become members of his community, without desiring them to leave the places of worship they had formerly attended. This plan was productive of the happiest consequences. A multitude of church-men, and very many dissenters, gave him the right hand of fellowship; and continued in connection with their own communities.

But as he wished to become all things to all men, he soon found it necessary, to have service in church hours, with baptism, the Lords supper, and burial of the dead, in London. In Kingswood also, he considered it his duty, to let the poor colliers worship in their own chapel, without constraining them to attend at any neighbouring church.

When the societies and congregations became numerous in many places, and found it either inconvenient to attend other places of worship, or the wicked lives of ministers and communicants prevented their going with a good conscience, he yielded to their intreaties, and allowed them the privileges they requested. This liberty not only introduced preaching into many of our chapels in church hours but led the methodists in Scotland to petition and obtain, the privilege of all the ordinances of the gospel, in their own places of worship.

It is generally supposed, that ministers of the gospel of *every denomination*, are more liberal in their principles than their people. They have more time for reading and study, than most of their hearers. This enlarges their minds, and is eminently calculated to banish from them superstition, bigotry, prejudice, and party-spirit. This was the case with Mr Wesley. In the infancy and youth of methodism, he wrote several things in favor of our people continuing united with the church. In the pulpit he frequently insisted upon the same subject. This led many of his *old friends* to be champions for the church of England, principally on his account; and constrained them to go beyond him in their zeal for the establishment. But when he saw it necessary to give the people in Scotland, and many societies in England, liberty to worship in church hours &c. they thought him inconsistent, and cried loudly against what they called *innovation*. If they had stood in his place, with the same *enlarged views*, it is very probable, his conduct would have met with their

cordial approbation. But as this was not the case, he submitted to their reproach, and kept constantly enlarging his course.

What they considered as foibles in his character, were some of the most *praise-worthy actions of his life*. He never considered himself infallible. He saw it necessary to recede from his *general maxims*, in particular cases and circumstances. He opposed, as every sensible methodist would do in our present situation, an open avowed separation from the church of England. But at the same time, he was sufficiently convinced, that there were cases in which it was not only lawful, but *expedient* for our people to withdraw from *some ministers*, and worship in church hours in our own chapels. He justified the steps he took, both by conversation, and in the different pieces he published on the subject.

While several of his old friends condemned him for giving liberty to many congregations, to worship as they were persuaded would be most for the glory of God, a greater number of his most sensible and pious followers, both preachers and private members, supposed, he restricted the liberties of his people too much in many places; and did not allow them all the privileges which they had a right to demand of him, by the *authority of the scriptures*. Between the two parties, he was brought into a very critical situation. On the one hand, his love for the church of England, and his desire to spread a leaven of vital religion through all her members,—what he had written in favour of the church, and his people communicating with her.—A number of his old friends who had stood by him when he was most exposed to danger, and their earnest intreaties for no alteration to take place in his plan; these things had a powerful influence on his mind. On the other hand, the wickedness of many clergymen, and their preaching expressly against the articles and homilies of the church.—Our people in many places determining not to hear them: but either to spend the best part of the sabbath in sauntering from house to house, or joining the dissenters,—their claiming liberty to worship God in their own chapels, and declaring *he lorded it over their consciences*, if he would not grant them this privilege.—Many of his most sensible and pious helpers in the gospel pleading the cause of these persons, with arguments founded on the scrip-

scriptures, and from reason enlightened by the Spirit of God—these things in conjunction greatly affected him. What could he do in these circumstances? Could he have withheld what he granted without acting out of character? Could he have granted less with any probability of giving them any satisfaction? It is supposed by many, to whom he often spoke his mind freely, that had he followed the sentiments of his own heart, he would have given our people every where, perfect liberty to worship God as they pleased. But this he could not do without offending many of his friends. And for the sake of peace, he endeavoured to satisfy those, who urged him to allow them all the privileges of the gospel, by observing, he had gone as far as the present circumstances would admit of. He *forefaw* and *foretold*, what would happen after his death. He also gave directions how his sons in the gospel should act, when he was no more at the helm of their affairs. He advised that the separation might be gradual, not instantaneous. He observed, some persons in taking a coat to pieces, would rent it at once, but others would rip the seams stitch by stitch. By this metaphor he advised us to separate by degrees from the national church. These were his sentiments, as many can testify, when it pleased God to call him to rest from his labours. When we take a general view of the steps he took in this intricate and perplexing business, we are constrained to acknowledge, that all things considered, he acted as a *wise master builder* in the cause of Christ. He now rests from his arduous labours, and his works will follow him for ever. May we follow him in *every thing*, as far as he followed the Lord Jesus: that we may finish our course with joy, and share with him in the pleasures that are at God's right hand, through the ages of ages!

In the time of the American war, the minds of thousands were stirred up to examine both civil and religious principles. And after the Americans obtained peace on such terms as they wished for, this caused a general enquiry to take place throughout Europe, on the most interesting subjects of government and religious establishments. As we had many preachers in America, it was natural for us to be anxious on their account. But when we saw their work prospering, and their numbers rapidly increasing, we were constrained to own, that God was

with

with them. Those of the preachers that deserted the work on account of their *political principles*, have been of little or no use in our connexion since: while those of our brethren who nobly stood by the work of the Lord in the dark and cloudy day, have been abundantly blessed in their labours. Many of them are still running to and fro, like burning and shining lights, to spread the knowledge of God and of Christ to all that attend their ministry. The Lord has so *gloriously*, and so *singularly* owned the word of his grace, by our preachers in that part of the world, since the late disastrous war, that the most prejudiced amongst us, have been obliged to wonder and adore.

It would be exceedingly unjust to suppose, that a large majority of our preachers while Mr Wesley was living, never thought for themselves. Many of them examined our doctrines and discipline, with the greatest impartiality. They did not place implicit confidence in any man, or in any number of men. Their sentiments on religious liberty were communicated freely to Mr Wesley, and they contended frequently, for every society and congregation to be allowed to worship God as they pleased. Both in private and in open conference, they endeavoured to maintain the rights of those, who could not conscientiously worship in the church of England. At the same time, however, they *considered it their duty*, to be subject to Mr Wesley and a majority of their brethren, as far as they could do it to the glory of God. They were thankful in having such a large sphere of publishing the good tidings of salvation opened before them; and were encouraged to hope, *that in due time*, all our societies would be delivered from every principle, which militates against their happiness. It is exceedingly unjust to insinuate, that they were men, of bad principles, because they submitted to Mr Wesley, in what they *never considered* as essential to the salvation of souls. It was their *glory* to submit as they did; and will be to their praise in future, by all that are unprejudiced.

When the Lord graciously called our venerable father to his great reward, the scene was altered. Those things which he maintained purely by his own influence, as the founder of methodism, and which were submitted to, on account of his age and great usefulness in the church, become subjects of debate. The minds of the people and

the preachers were a good deal agitated, before the conference met in 1791. The signal gun was fired from Hull, for trustees, stewards, leaders, and private members, to resolve in every place, to continue united with the church of England. This was seconded by many of our principle societies; but opposed by others. Many letters circulated before the meeting of the conference. Many things were said in defence of the people having an *inalienable right* in any place, to worship God, as they considered would be most for his glory: while a general cry was made from every quarter, for us to adhere strictly to the church, and allow no innovations.

The eyes of our societies and congregations were lifted up to the conference. Dissenters of every denomination were anxiously waiting to see what we should determine. When the preachers assembled, they found two parties, opposite to each other, both wishing to be heard, and to have their claim granted. A great number of our societies desired us to cleave to the church with purpose of heart: and many of the old methodists even wished that the liberty Mr Wesley had given to different societies, might be wrested from them. The other party earnestly desired to have the privilege of worshipping in church hours, and to have the Lord's supper administered among them. After very long and warm debates on the subject, a majority of the conference decreed, that the plan should be taken up and pursued, as Mr Wesley left it. This decree satisfied the minds of many, and brought a degree of tranquility into those places, which had been agitated. That part of the connexion which wished to preserve the old plan supposed, their end was fully accomplished; while the other party considered, that Mr Wesley's plan admitted of *subterfuges* as they wished to introduce.

As the sacrament was given in several places, and some of the preachers ordained to administer in the course of the year, many of the friends, who were warm advocates for the church, took the alarm, and cried out exceedingly against these steps. They lost sight of the plan that Mr Wesley left us at his death, which admitted of ordination, baptism, the Lord's supper, &c. and considered the preachers who had engaged in these things, as *dreadful innovators*. Several pamphlets were written, to prove, that these steps were both lawful and expedient. When the conference met

met in London, in 1792, the preachers who had been guilty of ordination or the sacrament, were tried by their brethren, and condemned. A long trial took place upon a pamphlet which had been written in favour of liberty, and the author censured for asking, "Are we enemies to this great apostolical man, because we think he held *some* notions which are not founded on the scriptures; and are now desirous of laying them aside?" This question was owned to be the worst part of the pamphlet, and ought not to pass with impunity.

After long and fruitless debates on the sacrament, it was put to the lot, whether the Lord's supper should be administered in England or not, the next year. As casting lots on this subject was *contrary to God*, and an eternal reproach to scripture, reason, and common sense, it is not in the least to be wondered at, that the lot came out for no sacrament the next year. As satan prevailed in having the lot appointed, he also managed the business, to crush liberty of conscience, and to make us *detestable* in the sight of the sensible and pious, of every denomination. Those that were for the church, and earnestly desirous of preventing liberty of conscience, triumphed, as *though God himself* had been particularly engaged, in restricting the privileges of our people. Every preacher, who should act contrary to the design of this lot, was threatened with expulsion. We left the conference under a dark cloud, which prevented the *sun of liberty* from shining upon our connexion that year. God frowned from Heaven upon us. We laboured through the year without success. Our numbers decreased. A lawsuit commenced, which, if it does not rob us of the best chapel we have, is likely to involve us in about 2000 pounds expence. To have a secret curse on our labours, and be scourged with this lawsuit, were matters that could not pass unnoticed by those who wish well to our zion. Several large societies, however, resolved, if the conference would not allow them to have the Lord's supper in their own chapels, they would have it somewhere without their consent.

When the preachers met in Leeds 1793, the subject was brought forward, and new debates commenced. After much altercation had passed, it was found *absolutely necessary*, either to allow the sacrament in some places, or lose our societies and congregations. This forced a

majority of the preachers to consent, that the influence of the lot should be suspended. A decree passed, (which might have been expected from a conclave of bishops in the tenth century.) "That the sacrament should not be given but where the society were unanimous, and where they would not be content without it". We groaned under this act of uniformity till the Bristol conference: when we had it renewed with some little alteration. A vast number of places, however, were put down on the minutes, 1794, where the people were unanimous, according to the spirit of the decree. This greatly affected the minds of those, who wished to bind us to the church forever.

A few trustees had met previous to the meeting of the Bristol conference, and a delegation was appointed from them, to bring an address and proposals to the preachers, when they should assemble. After they perceived their plans could not be fully adopted, many of them were exceedingly mortified.

The Bristol trustees determined, however, to fire a signal gun of a different nature from that which was fired from Hull, three years before. They threw off the *authority* of the conference, and rejected one of its members. This was only beginning to let out the waters of strife. It happened in a good time of the year. The preachers, trustees, leaders, stewards, and private people, had eleven months to conflict in a paper war, before the conference could meet again. This was attended with many things, both pleasing and painful to the connexion. A vast number of papers, letters, and pamphlets were written and circulated on the subject. The dispute went farther than the cases in hand. Our constitution, laws, discipline, &c. were brought into fight, and many things proposed as amendations of our plan.

It was supposed by many, that when the conference met in Manchester 1795, it would be impossible to prevent a division among the preachers. A number of respectable trustees from different parts in the kingdom assembled in Manchester, to see what they called *their rights* maintained; and to propose to the conference, their determinations. Never was there a greater alarm spread through the connexion, than that which prevailed the last year. This, however, was sanctified by the grace of God, and

led our people to give themselves to fasting and prayer. The preachers were also driven to the Lord in these exercises, and had cause to own, that God Almighty was propitious to their prayers. After many proposals had been made by the trustees and those preachers in their interests, it was judged necessary, to enter into articles of pacification, to prevent a breach in our body. These articles are *sufficient to shew*, that we are far from that state of liberty of conscience, which is our privilege as *Christians*, and as *Britons*.

Let us examine the first article, with the addenda that is connected with it. "The sacrament of the Lord's supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to the chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people,) on the other hand, allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the conference shall be obtained, before the Lord's supper be administered. Addenda. "The stewards and leaders, who desire the Lord's supper among themselves, shall testify in writing to the conference, that they are persuaded no separation will be made thereby". Suppose a society consists of 2000 members, should 950 of them wish for the sacrament, they cannot have it, unless a majority of the stewards &c, give their consent. Their humble request has to pass through three houses, and must have a majority in each of them, before it can be granted. 1. The leaders and stewards are supposed to be the representatives of the people, and may be considered as a house of commons. 2. But should they all be unanimous for the sacrament, the trustees, who act as a house of lords, can by a simple majority, prevent their lawful claims from being granted. 3. And should both the former allow the sacrament, the conference may act as a house of popes, on account of some circumstances that may be brought forward by individuals, and prevent their lawful claims. This is the sum of all the liberty we have attained, after four years contention. When we compare this article with the constitution of great Britain, we find ourselves at a vast distance from that portion of religious liberty among ourselves, which the nation enjoys of civil liberty. This, however, is our *own doing*, and it is marvelous in the sight of very many.

If it be matter of astonishment that the methodist conference should submit to such decrees as this, there are several things to be observed on the subject. 1 Many of the preachers protested against this rule, and would not on any account vote for it. 2 Others were satisfied with the explanation of the word separation, which Messrs Thompson, Benson, and others gave of it. "They *positively declared*, that it was not one, two, five, ten, twenty, a hundred, or any number of persons leaving the society, that made a separation, unless they had a preacher at their head." 3 Others submitted to it, under a firm persuasion, that it would only continue for one year: or at *the farthest*, for two or three years. 4 But the greatest part of those who voted for it, did it to prevent a division of the preachers and the people. Not one in twenty would have submitted to such an *arbitrary rule*, if it had not been with a view to preserve *some kind of peace* amongst us.

I forbear examining the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th, rules of pacification: as well as the 3rd, and 4th articles of the addenda: with several things, that may be found in the second part, concerning discipline. Let every impartial reader make his own reflections upon them. Most of them sufficiently prove, that we are not yet come out of Egypt. If we are freed from the house of bondage, they only declare us to be in the wilderness, on our way to the promised land.

Let us conclude this part of the pamphlet with a few reflections, which naturally arise from the subject we have been considering.

1. Liberty of conscience, is one of the most valuable blessings which a people can enjoy. It leaves every person perfectly free to examine all the doctrines and discipline of the different national churches, and dissenting congregations, that are established. Creeds, articles and confessions of faith, homilies, &c, &c, are all brought to the law and the testimony; and every thing is rejected, that does not agree with the word of God: which is the only and sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. For a man to live where this blessing is enjoyed, and not to avail himself of its advantages, discovers such a want of respect for himself, as can never be sufficiently execrated. If bigotry, superstition, attachment to modes of wor-

worship, which have not been examined; and to creeds and articles of faith, which never have been seriously thought upon, should compose our religion in such a state, will it not be to our present condemnation, and to our eternal reproach?

2 In these nations we have a very great portion of liberty of conscience. Our excellent laws allow us to prove all things in religion, and to hold fast that which is good. If we are *forced* to support the church by tithes and offerings, we are not constrained to be members of her body. We may renounce her doctrines and discipline with impunity, and worship God according to the desire of our heart. Our fathers looked with *earnest desire* to these days, and rejoiced at the prospect of the followers of Jesus, ever being blessed with them.

3 Is it not amazingly strange, that any sect or party should refuse to give to their brethren, what the laws of our country so cheerfully allow? Is it not cruelty and persecution to restrict one another in those things, which are not essential to the salvation of the soul? Does not every man that would force his brother, to submit to any modes of worship, against his own mind, act the part of a spiritual tyrant, and lord it over God's heritage? We detest the conduct of persecuting Neros, and all the bloody actions of the great Whore of Babylon, and yet in our measure, we tread in their steps. If a man of any sect or party, should force his creed of faith upon us, and constrain us to worship in his way contrary to our will, or prevent us from worshipping according to the convictions of our own mind, he is a Nero to us—a true son of the great Whore of Babylon.

4 Nothing can be easier than tolerating one another in matters that are indifferent. Can any thing be more *easy* or more *equitable* than the following simple rule, for us as a people to walk by? Those of our friends who desire to worship with the national church, in those hours she devotes to the service of God, and to receive the sacrament with her members, let them do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. If you can fairly convince them that their conduct is wrong, do it in simplicity and godly sincerity. But if you cannot, as you *value your salvation*, do not hinder them from going forward in their worship. Let those of our friends that cannot join the church in
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her worship, nor receive the sacrament with her members, be allowed to worship where they please, and to have the Lord's supper either among themselves, or where they can receive it to the glory of God, and their own satisfaction. Is not this *simple plan* exactly according to the rules which our Lord and his apostles have given us? And does not reason speak in favour of it, in each of our breasts? We should lose sight of what we call *old* or *new* plans, and follow the unerring rules of the scriptures; and those principles of reason, which are found in the most pious followers of the Lord Jesus, as well as in the rest of the world. See an excellent pamphlet on toleration, written by R. Robinson of Cambridge.

PART

PART THE SECOND.

THE OUT-LINES OF A CONSTITUTION;

HUMBLY

PROPOSED TO THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS.

IT is generally allowed, that a christian society, is a voluntary assembly, of different persons uniting together, to help each other in the way to eternal life. If there be any thing of a temporal nature, to induce us to join any sect or party of christians, it cannot be supposed, that that church will be composed of sincere followers of Christ. There are a thousand things of a temporal nature, to induce different persons to be members of national churches. And in almost every community, there are several things which engage persons to join with those that are sincere, who are not at all affected with the religion they profess. Perhaps the poorest communities, and those that are the most despised and persecuted in the world, are the most sincere in their profession, and the most devoted to God.

Nothing could be more free and voluntary than the first societies of the methodists. The people applied to Mr Wesley and his helpers, enquiring, What shall we do to be saved? They cheerfully gave the right hand of fellowship to those who were under the same impressions; and were formed into classes, to help each other in those things which belonged to their peace. All our societies were founded in this way. Every new society that is raised up in any place, is formed according to this rule. And all that join our societies in any place now, come forward without any compulsion, to be members of our
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body. We do every thing in our power to persuade our hearers to fly from the wrath to come; and when we see persons affected by our word, and desirous of accepting salvation in Christ Jesus, we advise them to join the followers of the Son of God, that they may be encouraged to go forward, in the way that leads to eternal life.

When our societies were first formed, Mr Wesley and the preachers, generally appointed such leaders, as they supposed would help forward the salvation of those, belonging to the different classes. In most of the new societies which are formed now, the preachers appoint the leaders, and other officers in the church, if there are any. Perhaps this has led several preachers to suppose, that we have an *absolute right* to appoint trustees, leaders, and stewards, without consulting any person belonging to the society. An assistant preacher, whose name I shall not mention, wrote the following paragraph to a trustee and leader, of a certain society. And when he did not sufficiently respect his authority, he kicked him down stairs, put him out of the trust-deed, took his class paper from him, and read him out of the society. This is the paragraph,—“The assistant has a right to place or displace, “any steward, leader, or member, as he judges necessary, “independent of all others.” He quoted the 16th Journal, and 21st page to prove it.

We should carefully distinguish between society in its infancy, and society considerably advanced toward maturity. It might be very proper for our preachers to appoint leaders &c. when many of our large societies were formed; but to do it at present alone, might be exceedingly injurious to the cause of the Redeemer. It may be very right for us to appoint leaders to new societies which we form now, but in ten or twenty years, we should act against the interest of our connexion, were we to do this without consulting with any of the members of that society. And we should *never forget*, that there is a vast difference between us, and those ministers who are stationed for life, in the places where they preach. We change our circuits so frequently, that it is impossible for us to know the people so well, as we should do, were we longer with them. If we also consider, how little time we spend in many of our principal places, this will induce us to acknowledge

knowledge, that we are not sufficient of ourselves, to change leaders and stewards.

As a spirit of jealousy has entered into the hearts of many of our leading men, upon different parts of our conduct, it would be our wisdom and interest, to remove it as far as possible. In many places they have had just cause to complain. Their complaints have not exceeded the bounds of moderation. And the only way to remove their jealousy and silence their complaints, is to act in consort with our people in every thing. In those circuits where the preachers do this, the people are happy and satisfied. They consider themselves highly favoured, and bless God for their privileges. But when other preachers are appointed of a different conduct, it exceedingly grieves them. They want something to be fixed, to prevent any preacher from acting contrary to the interests of the societies: as well as to make the preachers act in consort with each other. It is probable, we may meet their views, without injuring ourselves in any thing. Let us only fix our plan in such a way, that every preacher shall be bound to maintain their interests as well as our own, and they will be perfectly satisfied. We cannot do this more to their satisfaction, and our own advantage, than by separating, as far as possible, the temporal and spiritual concerns of our societies, and giving them a suitable place in all our affairs. With a view to satisfy every reasonable person in our connexion, and to help forward the salvation of the people, I shall humbly propose, what appears to me, *an equitable plan*. And which must sooner or later be adopted, if we would render ourselves extensively useful in the vineyard of Christ. I do not mean that this plan must be adopted exactly as it stands: but I mean, that something of this nature must be appointed, otherwise there will be continued complaints, from almost every part of our connexion.

First, let us consider the subject as it refers to the spiritual state of our societies.

To lay a proper foundation, would it not be necessary, for the rules of our societies and bands, to be carefully examined; and in some parts either altered or explained, that they may give no offence to the unprejudiced? And as there are a number of minutes, containing rules both for the people and ourselves, in the yearly minutes of the con-

conference, would it not be right to collect those into a pamphlet, and determine, which of them are now binding, and which of them have lost their influence? As they lie buried at present, many of them are forgotten, which are of great importance; and others continue as laws, which we never can suppose are binding upon us now. Would it not also be necessary to examine the large minutes of the conference, and either determine to keep those rules which are binding sacred, or otherwise let them be expunged? And let every thing that is indifferent, be explained or laid aside, that our people may not *reproach us* for having rules which we never attend to. Would it not also be necessary to examine that clause in our deed, which requires every preacher to conform in his preaching, to the doctrines contained in Mr Wesley's notes on the New Testament, and his four volumes of sermons? Is there nothing in the notes or in those sermons that militates against the scriptures, which are "the only sufficient rule of our faith and practice"? The papists are required to receive the doctrines which are taught by their priests, without examining them by the word of God. Every member of the church of England, is to receive the scriptures, as they are explained by the church. And every methodist preacher is to mould his doctrines according to the notes and sermons of Mr Wesley. If the conference were to collect all the private rules in the yearly minutes, and publish them to be considered, along with the class and band rules; the large minutes, the notes on the New Testament, and the four volumes of sermons, desiring the opinion of our people upon them throughout the connexion, and then make the alterations which are considered necessary by the people at large, it would be to the honour and advantage of our cause. It would lead our friends to examine our doctrines (a thing which thousands of them have never yet done) and to compare them with the scriptures of truth. The leaders could easily collect the sense of the people upon every subject; and it could be brought regularly through leaders, quarterly, and district meetings to the conference. I expect to be reproached for hinting at this; but am conscious, it would be abundantly better for our people to know the doctrines we hold, than for them to go forward in *that ignorance* which cannot be
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for their happiness. And would it not be greatly to the honour of their character, to prove all things, belonging to methodism, and only hold fast that which is good, both for their faith and practice?

2. Members ought to be received into, and excluded from the society, by the consent of our people. In little societies this may be done without the least difficulty; and in large societies by the leaders. In many places, different persons have been introduced into the society by a preacher, or through the influence of some individual, which would not have been accepted by the people. And it has generally happened, that these persons have been a great curse to our cause, and in the end have acted so contrary to our rules, as to force the preachers to read them out of society publicly in the congregation. Suppose the names of all that are to be received into connexion, were to be read over in the society, a fortnight before the tickets are given, and the people desired to examine carefully into their characters before that time; and should any thing be found in their conduct to prevent their having a place with us, our friends should inform their leader of it, that he might have time to bring it forward in the leaders meeting, previous to the tickets being given, would not this prevent improper persons from having a place with us?

The same plan ought to be pursued in excluding members from the society. How admirable our Lord's rule is on this subject! Those who offend are to be told of their fault alone, and every thing done that is required to reclaim their wanderings. Then, should they continue to act contrary to God, two or three are to be called in to assist, in striving to prevent the ruin of a brother, that has given way to sin. If their counsel and admonitions have no effect, the church is to be informed, and the last step taken that our Lord requires. Suppose the society should be informed a fortnight before the tickets are given, that such a person is in the connexion, and has been dealt with according to the direction of Jesus Christ; that he must be excluded at the renewing of the tickets, unless he be brought into a better mind; desiring at the same time that they would bear him on their hearts before God, and use any means they can devise to bring him to repentance, before the time elapse which is appointed

ed for his removal from us ; would not this perfectly satisfy the minds of our people, and of en, under the blessing of God, be a means of healing those who have back-slidden ? But if a preacher exclude members on his own account, or because of the prejudice of some individuals against the accused, he not only acts contrary to our Lord's rule, but exposes a soul to death, and grieves the minds of many in the society. The wisdom from above, that is necessary to direct in these cases, is first pure, then peaceable, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. There is something in the heart of every christian, that loves a generous conduct, in those that minister in holy things. When they behold any thing contrary to it, they grieve, and are wounded. We ought to be *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

3. It is the privilege of the members of our society, to meet in those classes which are most agreeable to their own minds. And when a leader is wanting, the people have a right to choose the person that shall watch over their souls. If a preacher, or a leaders meeting impose a person to lead any class, without the consent of the people, their rights are invaded. When a preacher removes leaders without the consent of the people, and appoints others contrary to their mind, it is a *lording* it over their consciences : it is contrary to their interest and happiness. Every preacher has a right to name in the leaders meeting, the persons that are unsuitable for different classes, and to propose others more suitable. And with the concurrence of the leaders to appoint a change for a season, that the members of the class may have time to approve, or object to the change. Where the preachers have pursued this plan, they have generally got the men of their choice appointed, without the least opposition : and as they have been the choice of the people as well as the preacher and leaders, all parties have been perfectly satisfied. But where a contrary method has been pursued, it has frequently been attended with many evils. If we could fix a plan in large societies for the leaders to meet the classes, as we supply our circuits, this would be attended with the happiest consequences. In many places, it would be possible to introduce this method of leading classes. It would be exceedingly useful to the people ; and be a means of quickening the minds of our class leaders. Let us only shew the

the *advantages* and *necessity* of it to our leaders and people, and we shall prevail on many to submit cheerfully to it. If the conference were to recommend it in strong terms, it is probable, the greatest part of our people would instantly comply with their request..

4. Our leaders meetings should be better attended than they are at present. If they were more taken up with matters of importance, for the welfare of our people and congregations, perhaps our leaders would see the necessity of attending. If every other meeting was wholly taken up about the spiritual concerns of our societies, it might be attended with infinite good to thousands. If an hour was spent once in the fortnight, in enquiring who are sick belonging to the different classes, and what is the state of their mind?—how often they are visited?—what relief is given to the poor?—what is the cause that different persons are so many times absent from their classes?—what can be done to make them meet better?—who are ignorant and unawakened amongst us?—who are resting in convictions and good desires?—who are walking at liberty, and going on to perfection?—who are growing cold and luke-warm?—who are living in any thing contrary to their profession?—what shall be done to the persons above named, to help forward their salvation?—which is the best method of leading a class?—what method do you use?—what subjects would be the best to preach on, in the present state of our society?—what can the preachers do to be more useful?—can we appoint a more excellent way of meeting the bands?—can we prevail on more of our people to meet in them?—&c. &c. If these, and other subjects were seriously considered, an hour might be spent very profitably once a fortnight. If the temporal business was transacted the other week, and the state of the poor and the sick particularly enquired into, respecting their different necessities, their wants might be supplied, and every thing relative to the outward welfare of the society, might be properly adjusted.

5. Our local preachers are in general, a very useful part of our body. Many of them are men of good abilities, and very laborious in the work of the Lord. They have published the good tidings of salvation, to the comfort and *advan'age* of thousands in our connexion. But

particular care should be taken, that the men we employ in ministering the word, should be sufficiently qualified for their office. The dissenters of every denomination hold it as an axiom in religion, that every society of people have a right to choose their own ministers. And they consider it as injurious for any man to be fixed as a minister over any congregation, unless he be fairly elected by a majority of those that compose it. But this rule would effectually destroy our plan of itineracy, were it established amongst us. It is impossible to allow our congregations the choice of their ministers unless we give up our present excellent mode of changing the preachers. It is possible however, to give them every thing they require in this subject. They only wish, that men of piety, ability, and usefulness may be employed in preaching the gospel to them. Is it not necessary to be very careful how we admit of persons entering upon the *solemn office*, of preaching the word of God in our congregations? After a man has been employed by the appointment of an assistant on the invitation of any people, should he not undergo a similar examination to that which is entered into, when persons are proposed to come out to travel amongst us? Three things are asked, and positive answers given to each of them, before any person is fairly admitted on trial as a travelling preacher. 1. Is he a man of solid piety, and of a good moral character? 2. Has he abilities to render him acceptable to the people in general, where he has laboured as a local preacher? 3. Has he been useful? Have sinners been awakened and converted by his ministry? Ought not something of this nature to be adopted respecting our local preachers? We should have some method of admitting them to exhort and preach. If they are men of humility, they will rather be thrust out by the people into the vineyard, than run before they are sent. Suppose every person that thinks he is called to give a word of exhortation, should be desired to tell his mind to his leader, or to the assistant preacher. Let him then be desired to attend the next leaders meeting, and inform the brethren, his reasons for supposing he is called to a more public place in the church: and let them judge whether he be a suitable person to encourage or not. If they think he is under divine impressions, let him be appointed to speak a little

in the class, or be sent to some small country place, that he may exercise himself in exhortation, before such as shall attend. If he has liberty to speak, and the people accept of his labours, and are *blessed* under his word, let a larger sphere of action be appointed for him. But should any novice, stirred up by pride, vain glory, idleness, or any other wrong principle, offer himself as a candidate, it will be easy to determine, whether to encourage him or not. Perhaps it would give greater satisfaction to the people, if all the approved local preachers were present in the leaders meeting, when candidates are proposed to come out to exhort and preach. Should it be found, that any who were appointed to make trial of their abilities, have deceived themselves, it would be well to prevent their having a plan to labour with the local preachers. And particular care should be taken, in examining every person that comes forward for a plan, upon the three particulars above-mentioned. Because a very great deal depends on having acceptable and useful local preachers.

If there are men among us, who have been employed for years as local preachers, that are neither acceptable to the people, nor blessed in their labours; but on the contrary, preach away our congregations, and greatly pain our people in their discourses, ought they not to be told of it, and desired to desist from further exercises in the ministry? This would cause a general rejoicing to the congregations, and be a blessing to the connexion.

In country places, where there are no leaders or local preachers to advise with, every assistant can act to the satisfaction of the people, who live in that neighbourhood. The sense of the preachers and leaders, who attend the quarter meeting, can be taken, before any man has a plan appointed among the local preachers. It is impossible to be too careful in receiving and continuing persons to labour among our people.

In those towns where there are several local preachers, would it not be exceedingly useful, for the travelling preachers in the circuit to meet them, either once a week, or once a fortnight, to have a free conversation with them, upon the nature and design of the ministry? A vast of things might be considered, which are necessary to be known, to make us workmen *that need not to be ashamed.*

ashamed. If our people have not clear ideas of the doctrines we preach, ought not every travelling and local preacher, to be able to define and explain them? Is it not exceedingly against the interest of our cause, when a public speaker, cannot give a rational scriptural definition, of justification—the new birth—sanctification &c. &c? And are there not many local, not to say travelling preachers, who cannot explain to the satisfaction of any sensible christian, a number of doctrines, which are essential to our salvation? The following, and other subjects, might be considered, in the meetings which may be established. What is original sin?—Does it spread its influence through the souls of all?—What is actual sin?—What is the difference between sins of omission, and sins of commission?—What is implied in a true evangelical repentance?—What is the nature and influence of true faith?—What is implied in justification?—What is meant by imputed righteousness?—What is sanctification, and how does it differ from justification?—How can we discern between temptation from the devil and the working of corrupt nature in ourselves?—What is implied in the scriptural account of election and reprobation?—Can true christians make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; or must they be infallibly saved? &c. &c. These, and a vast number of subjects, might be considered in the fear of God. to the mutual advantage of all that should assemble.

Would it not be well to consider also, what texts are suitable for the different congregations where we preach; and what method should be pursued in handling them? Would there be any sin in *examining the sermons of travelling preachers* in these meetings, with *meekness and fear*, that all might be edified? This would be considered by some as going too far, but all who wish to be acceptable and useful ministers of the gospel, would be thankful to have any of their errors pointed out, and a more excellently explained. If Claud's Essay on the composition of a sermon was read and considered, part by part, very much advantage might be derived from that incomparable publication. There are a number of other books, which are eminently calculated to be useful to all, who speak publicly in the name of the Lord Jesus. A few *enthusiasts* and *bigots* may oppose meetings of this nature,

ture, but all who desire to feed the flock of Christ, and to bring sinners to repentance, would thankfully embrace every opportunity of learning how to accomplish such *glorious ends*. If these meetings were conducted according to the word of God, they would be schools for all who speak publicly amongst us, and the whole connexion would be blessed under their influence. Travelling preachers would be constrained to give themselves to *reading, exhortation, and doctrine*, that they might speak in public with propriety, and be useful in the meeting of the local preachers. The local preachers would possess a spirit of holy emulation, which would encourage them to give diligence to buy up every opportunity that offers, to increase in wisdom and knowledge. We should all be driven to the throne of grace, to seek blessing from God: and to the scriptures, to learn from them, how to *finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus*. If such meetings brought a little more labour on assistant preachers, and on those of their brethren that should help in this glorious work, it would be crowned with blessing from the great Shepherd of souls, and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to our own minds.

The necessity of what is observed above, will appear to every person, that will only take time to think on the subject. Many of our local preachers are men of good natural parts, but their situation in life, prevents their acquiring much knowledge. They earnestly desire to be useful, as well as acceptable to the people. They feel a great want of ability for their work. They would thankfully spare two hours every week, to become acquainted with those things which are calculated to help them in calling sinners to repentance. Their want of time for study might in a great measure be made up, by the travelling preachers maturing, and bringing forward subjects, which are necessary to be considered. This would give them such knowledge of the *essential doctrines of religion* that they would always speak to the use of edifying. As many of them are fixed for life in the places where they live, they need a greater variety of subjects and of matter, than a travelling preacher, who is only stationed for one year or two. If we respect our own character,
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of the prosperity of methodism, we should religiously attend to this part of our duty.

In many circuits, the local preachers supply on Sundays, those places where we preach only on work day evenings. Many have opportunity of hearing them, who cannot always hear us. If they speak the word of God with propriety and success, the people are encouraged to come forward to hear us. They suppose, if the persons that labour six days in the week in temporal business can preach so well, what may they not expect from the travelling preachers, who have nothing to do, but attend on the ministry. When this is the case, they come cheerfully forward to hear, and our mutual labours are blessed to their souls. On the other hand, when a local preacher *murders his text*, produces nothing but *trite notions*, unworthy of a place in the pulpit, and raves exceedingly in his harangue, as though he was delivering something *very important*, every sensible hearer is offended, and many declare we are all enthusiasts: that we act more like madmen, than rational creatures, and will come no more to hear any of us. They also influence others to think meanly on us, and to shun our public ministrations.

6. As it is impossible to allow our people to choose their ministers, on account of the itinerant plan, yet ought we not to give them all the satisfaction in our power, both in receiving, and continuing preachers to travel with us? What do they desire on this head? 1. That every local preacher be a sufficient time on trial, before he is proposed to travel. 2. That none be proposed but those that are pious and moral—have promising gifts to render their labours acceptable—and are useful in awakening and converting sinners. 3. That they be proposed to travel in the March quarterly meeting, previous to the district meeting: and if a majority of those who attend that meeting object to their going out, that they be proposed no more that year. But if a majority of the brethren, assembled from all parts of the circuit, in a *full meeting* approve of them, that they be then proposed to travel. 4. In the district meeting, before they are offered as candidates to the conference, a majority of the persons that attend must both approve and recommend them.

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Then they will be honourably introduced amongst us, and go out with the approbation and prayers of all, who approve of their travelling. This mode of receiving preachers is *so reasonable*, that it is impossible to oppose it on *scriptural grounds*.

While Mr Wesley lived, he acted according to his own will, in receiving many to travel in our connexion. Many persons were brought from different circuits, by the influence of individuals, who would never have been recommended by the people, where they had frequently preached. The local preachers, the trustees, leaders, and stewards, were amazed and grieved at their having *crept* among us, in such a *dark unfair way*. Since the death of Mr Wesley, a good deal of care has been taken to prevent improper persons from commencing itinerant preachers. There was particular enquiry made the last conference on this subject; and very few were brought forward to travel, but what were well recommended. There were, however, some exceptions. A few were brought out who had not been proposed in the district meetings. And many that were not named in the quarterly meetings. Indeed, quarterly meetings have been in a great measure overlooked, in this *very important business*. As none but preachers have hitherto been allowed to attend our district meetings, it is possible for a local preacher to be recommended there by an assistant, without the knowledge, and against the minds of the people in the circuit, which he represents. This was done last year by a person that I could name, to the grief of many pious sensible friends. If delegates from the quarterly, attended the district meetings, they could declare the sense of the brethren they represent on this subject. Or if they are not allowed to attend the district meetings, minutes of what passes in quarterly meetings might be read, and every thing be done *decently and with order*. I, as an *assistant* may wish to have the honour of sending many labourers into the vineyard of Christ, and, therefore, thrust out, *against the minds of the people*, such men as are unfit for the work, to gratify my vanity. Or, I may like to *lounge at home* with my family, when I ought to go to *disagreeable or distant places*, and appoint a local preacher to supply for me. He does it cheerfully, hoping one good turn will make way for another. When he has

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hacked about for me throughout the year, as a reward for his services, I get him a place among the travelling preachers, without stopping to ask at a quarterly meeting, whether he will be suitable or not. Or, I may see a man that has not attended well to his business, and is on the borders of being a bankrupt, and not know what to turn his hand to. His pitiful stories may work on my passions, and without consulting with the people in the circuit where I labour, I may get him accepted, both at the district meeting and at the conference. Have not these methods been pursued to bring out preachers, even since the death of Mr Wesley? And have not the conference been deceived by some of its members, and accepted men to labour with us, that are to this day a dead weight to the connexion? A very great majority of the preachers abhor such conduct, and are distressed when they hear of it. Only let the people approve, by their representatives in a quarterly meeting, of those who are proposed as candidates to travel, and then the evils complained of will cease forever.

The same measures ought to be pursued, with those that are to be proposed for admittance into full connexion. Let them be fully approved of by the quarterly, and district meetings, before they are admitted. And if it be the opinion of a majority of both those meetings, that they should be continued longer on trial, or be desired to return to their former engagements, let the conference act as they suppose will be for the glory of God, in this matter. Ever considering, that, the cool dispassionate voice of the people, is the voice of God.

I speak with reverence, when I ask, ought not the people to be heard, when they declare in a number of circuits, that different preachers in full connexion, have not abilities for their work; or that their character, after being tried for a number of years, is a reproach to our cause? Should not such persons have something allowed them to begin business with, and either give up preaching altogether, or only preach where they are desired to do it, as local preachers? Ought not our people to be gratified in their repeated requests on this head, and be convinced, that we study their happiness in every thing?

Should

Should not the people, by their representatives in quarterly meetings, in some measure determine, when a preacher is worn out in his master's service, and should either become supernumerary, or be superannuated? Many good men, wish to spend the dregs of an useful life, in the service of the churches. But they are not adequate to the work of the circuits, to which they are appointed. They should submit to the determinations of the people, who honour them highly for their work's sake, and be content to spend their few remaining days, in only preaching occasionally, or not preaching at all; as shall be considered most for the glory of God. This would give a number of *old veterans* in the cause of Christ, a little time to trim their lamps, before they enter upon the joy of their Lord; and it would make way for their places in the circuits to be better supplied, by those preachers who are able to labour in the blessed work of the ministry.

7. The whole body of methodists, however dispersed through the nations, are intimately united. The same doctrines are preached in every place, and the same discipline exercised. *We walk in the same rules and mind the same things*: things which make for our peace, and by which we may edify one another. Every society, however, is independent of each other, in matters of an indifferent nature. And none have a right to lord it over the consciences of their brethren. Preachers, trustees, leaders, and stewards, in a religious point of view, are no more than brethren to the private members. They are more than brethren in one point of view: they are their servants for Christ's sake. In this sense we dare not call any person our master, but Christ, and we are all brethren in him. This gives every society, let its members be many or few, an unalienable right to worship God as they please. This gives every society in our connexion, a right to determine, what hours are most suitable for public worship—where and how the sacrament shall be administered &c. &c. And a majority of the society in every place ought always to be fairly obtained, before any thing of importance is determined. As no society is so large but it may assemble in the place appointed for public worship, the fairest and most equitable way of knowing the minds of the people, would be by stating the subject properly, not endeavouring to bias their judge-

judgement any way, and then leaving them at *full liberty*, to vote which way they please. The votes could not be collected so well by the leaders. Though in some cases, this might be submitted to, when the whole society could not assemble. If the majority should determine for service in church hours, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, baptism, and burial of the dead, by our own preachers, it would be a sin in the sight of God, to hinder them from enjoying these privileges. No trustees, leaders, stewards, or even preachers, could prevent them, without taking the place of Christ, and lording it over God's heritage. We all have an equal right to vote in these matters, as we all are redeemed by Christ, and have each a soul to save, *equally precious in the sight of God*, with the souls of our trustee brethren. The minority have always a right to do as they please. If they can submit, saying, "The will of the Lord be done," all will be well. If they cannot, they may worship in church hours, receive the sacrament, &c. &c. as they have done; and in every thing else be united to their brethren, in the bonds of the gospel. If the conference, a body of trustees, or any person or number of persons, prevent a society from having the privilege of determining these matters, it is *tyranny on their part, and oppression to the people*.

8. Quarterly meetings may be made a singular blessing to our connexion. If a delegate from every society could be prevailed on to attend them, and all the local preachers in the circuit, with the leaders and stewards of the places where they are held, it is impossible to tell what advantage would accrue through them to our people. I shall here consider them, as eminently calculated to help forward the spiritual interests of the Redeemers kingdom. If there be any thing to alledge against the character, doctrines, or abilities of travelling or local preachers, a fair investigation may immediately take place, and every thing be done that is necessary, in all cases that are brought forward. And if any matters are too great to be determined here, they can be prepared for the meeting of the district. In these meetings the state of the different societies can be considered, and measures adopted that are likely to be of service to the circuit at large. It should be determined here, whether preaching shall be continued or not, in those places, which have

have been hitherto barren and unfruitful. And also, all proposals for dividing circuits should be fixed in these meetings. If there be a necessity for a division, the brethren will readily agree to it; if there is not, they will prevent that, which would be an injury to our cause. If our leaders &c. had been consulted in the division of many circuits, they would have prevented, what we now feel to be a burden, which we can scarcely support.

In the quarterly meeting preceeding the district meeting, particular care should be taken that every matter be properly prepared and matured, that may be presented to that meeting, to be considered by the preachers &c. It should be proposed here, which of the preachers may stay a second year with the greatest advantage to the people, if any of them must be changed. And *no assistant ought to be continued a second year in a circuit, to the disadvantage of a brother of equal standing in the work, and whose family has a right to an equal stay with that of his.* If both of them cannot stay, let the man that is the most acceptable, and whose labours have been most blessed, be preferred. And let this be determined by the quarterly meeting. The preachers may withdraw, if it be doubtful, and let the brethren speak their minds freely, determining always, *never to be biased by any consideration,* but the glory of God, and the good of his cause. It may also be necessary to mention, what preachers are likely to suit the circuit, and propose, with submission to the will of God, and with the consent of the district and the conference, to have them appointed: or others whom the preachers are satisfied, will be both acceptable and useful.

As it is very probable, the conference will soon appoint that, lay delegates from the quarterly, shall attend the district meetings, suitable persons must be nominated. Suppose two from every circuit were appointed to attend; one of them to transact the spiritual, and the other the temporal concerns of the circuit. And in the quarterly meeting immediately after the meeting of the district, every thing should be laid before the brethren that concerns the circuit, and the conference be petitioned or not petitioned, as matters should determine. Perhaps it would be for the advantage of our connexion, for a let-

ter to be drawn up in this meeting to the conference, either approving of what the district has done, or objecting; and *freely and fully* stating the alterations which they wish to have made. This would give the conference every information they could desire, and might end in the general good of our whole body.

9. Our district meetings may be made a proper medium between the people and us. In them we may *heartily unite* to promote each other's interests. If we suffer them to be on such a foundation, as the welfare of our connexion requires, we shall prove their utility, beyond any thing we have yet experienced.

To make them as useful as possible, 1st. Let two delegates attend from every circuit, one to manage the spiritual, and another the temporal concerns of the people. Let them both be present when the business of the district is transacted, from the beginning to the end.

2. Let the characters of the preachers be called over before them, and a fair examination take place, upon our piety, morality, gifts, and usefulness.

Our present mode of examining each others characters, only makes sensible people laugh at us. In a place remote from the circuits where we have laboured, when none are present but ourselves, it is *gravely asked*, "Has any person any thing against brother K——?" We cannot be supposed to accuse each, other unless it be for something very immoral. Besides the question is a very superficial examination: it does not include what ought to be considered in calling over our names. Ought we not to ask, is brother K—— pious in his conversation, and moral in his whole conduct? Has he gifts that render him acceptable and useful? Are there any souls awakened and converted under his ministry? Does he preach instant in season, and out of season, delivering his discourses in such a manner, as to convince the people that he is in earnest? Does he regularly meet the societies after preaching, and endeavour to press on the people to follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Does he visit the poor as well as the rich, and seek in private to save souls? Does he attend carefully on the sick, visiting and relieving, according to the nature of his office? Does he rise early

ly, and either preach to the people, or pursue his studies? Or does he lounge away his mornings in bed, and spend a great part of the day in idleness? Is he an eternal smoker, or does he abstain from every thing that would render his company disagreeable? &c.

These, and similar questions, might be proposed in the meeting of the district, and suitable answers returned, according to the manner of our conducting ourselves before the people. It is impossible to have a fair candid examination of our character, but in the quarterly and district meetings. The *necessity* and *advantages* of this mode of examination are so clear, that there are few preachers but what would wish for it: unless it be those who are conscious that their conduct would not bear the test of such an excellent plan.

3. It might then be proposed, who should continue in the circuits another year,—where those might remove with advantage, who should leave their circuits,—what preachers might fill up their places,—leaving every thing at liberty for the conference to confirm or set aside, as the preachers should consider most advisable.

4. Consider the state of the circuits. What places ought to be given up—what new places tried—what circuits divided—what circuits united, that have not prospered since they were divided.

5. To fix as far as possible, where the service shall be introduced in church hours,—where the Lord's supper shall be introduced,—or where it shall be given up.

6. Who ought to attend the conference—by what conveyance ought they to go—How shall the circuits be supplied in their absence

7. Lastly, with submission to the preachers, and the connexion at large, to appoint one or two lay delegates from every district meeting, to attend the conference. That is, the delegates from the quarterly meetings, shall have full liberty to choose out of their body one or two men to attend the conference, to lay before the preachers the minutes of the district meetings, and to transact the affairs, both spiritual and temporal, as far as they can, of the districts they represent. To answer any questions that may be proposed, and to see that the rights of the people are properly maintained. Their expence to be

borne by the free subscriptions of the societies, belonging to the districts they shall represent.

One district meeting in the year, conducted in the best manner that could be devised, would be quite sufficient for every thing that would happen in most districts, between the conferences. Where any thing extraordinary happened, which required immediate redress, a district meeting might be called, and every thing settled as far as possible, without the least delay. And what could not be settled in the extraordinary meeting of the district, might lie over to the proper district meeting, and if not adjusted there, be referred to the conference.

As the temporal as well as spiritual concerns of our connexion are both considered and settled in the conference, it will be necessary to bring them forward, before any thing is said about the management of our affairs, in that assembly. We have been so many years in the habit of managing our temporal matters alone, that any alteration of our plan on this subject, may seem against our interests. But if we suffer ourselves to think upon the many reflections which have been thrown out against us on this head, we shall wish to remove *the appearance of evil*, from the sight of our people. Though we as a body are poor when we compare ourselves with others, yet we may be corrupted by the collections we have under our care, and not use them to the glory of God. They may at least be *an occasion of evil* to some, if they are not properly managed. What is it makes the ministers of the church of Rome, and those of rational churches so lazy, and at the same time such a reproach to religion in their conduct? And what would hinder us from being *as they are*, in our life and conversation, were we fixed in their places and enjoyed their livings? Perhaps the ministers of the gospel were as pious and as labourious as we are, when Constantine turned christian: but when he richly endowed the magnificent churches which he built, and raised the clergy to dignity and honour, they were corrupted, and became a curse in the earth. If we were endowed with riches, and raised to honourable lucrative places, which of us would be able to stand against the influence of corruption? In infinite mercy the Lord has kept us poor to the present, to prevent

vent us from being idle, and becoming a curse to the nations. We had better want a few hundred pounds at a conference to supply our deficiencies, than have one pound in hand.

It is supposed, however, that our present necessities have arisen from *want of economy*: And, that our collections, *if properly managed*, are more than sufficient to supply all our wants. This is the opinion of many of our most sensible people; and several of them have withheld their subscriptions, till we will allow, a more equitable plan of disbursement to be adopted. They frequently declare, we keep our money matters secret, and will only publish gross sums of what we expend, that we may hide from our people, a number of things that would not bear examination. They solemnly declare, if we will only suffer a fair statement of our wants to be laid before them, they will help to the utmost of their power. But while we will not publish in detail, the monies that are expended, they cannot consider us upright in our proceedings. This is not the opinion of a few, *but the opinion of thousands*. And it is spreading rapidly among our people throughout the connexion. If we value our characters, we ought immediately to adopt such measures, as may stay the plague, and give us the confidence of our societies. For if this is not speedily done, we shall have many things to encounter, of a very painful nature. There is nothing in methodism, which we need to hide from our people, when our affairs are properly managed.

Only let us allow men appointed by them, to help in managing our temporal matters, and all our wants will be fully and cheerfully supplied. They will prevent us from wasting that money, which in part has been collected from many that needed it to supply their own wants, but at the same time, they will *richly administer* to our *real necessities*. Let us, in the name of the Lord Jesus, roll away the stone of reproach that is upon us; and let us convince our people, that we are seeking their salvation, and not their gold and silver.

The following, or a similar plan, would satisfy all parties, and answer every purpose we can have, as ministers of Jesus Christ.

1. As we wish the leaders to be the true representatives of the people, and desire to act in union with them, let them, in consort with the assistant preacher, choose society stewards. When a preacher determines the choice shall rest with himself, and never consults the leaders, but considers them like so many ciphers, it creates jealousy and distrust in them; which sooner or later manifests itself. In general, if we acted prudently with our people, we might have the very men appointed for stewards, that we wish for. And, *let it be fixed*, that nothing of considerable importance shall be bought into any house, or expended any otherway, till it is properly considered in a leaders meeting. To prevent *the shadow* of an appearance of any thing being smuggled, when there are extraordinary demands, either for the house, or any thing else, let a full meeting of the leaders be called, that the stewards may act as their servants, and they as the representatives of their different classes. Let the account of what is received and disbursed be read once a quarter, in the leaders meeting: and let the stewards shew their books to any private members of the society, that wish to examine them.

2. In every society, while the preacher gives the tickets, let the leader set down, what every person subscribes, and give the preacher an account of what is collected. In large towns, let the leaders give the quarterage to the stewards, that they may take care of it till the quarterly meeting: And in country places, let it be sent in by the leader to the circuit steward, if he cannot attend himself. But every society which has a steward, should urge him to attend, that every thing may be transacted to their advantage. If the preacher take it in, let him have a note from the leader, specifying the sum to the circuit stewards.

3. The circuit stewards should be chosen by the stewards of the various societies in the quarterly meeting. And both they and the town-stewards changed every two years, that there may be no undue influence obtained by a necessary office, either over the people or over the preachers. As all our wants are supplied by rule, unless in extraordinary cases, we have nothing to fear from any circuit stewards. It is very unreasonable

in us to wish to choose them. I have known an assistant put out a very worthy respectable circuit steward, and put in another of his own choosing, without consulting any man, because the former would not be *his tool*, and he thought the latter would. The conference detests such measures. But they cannot be prevented, unless we allow the circuit stewards to be chosen either by the town-stewards alone, or perhaps more properly, by all the brethren that attend the quarterly meeting. The assistant preacher may generally have his choice, by proposing such men, as are acceptable to the brethren every where.

Let every thing be done openly in the quarterly meetings. The monies that are paid by rule require no attention. But those that are extraordinary, should be properly considered. Such as, allowance for sickness—doctor's bills,—preachers going to the conference,—removal of families &c. It should be fixed what is necessary for each of these, *never in the least abridging* those that have need of help. If the whole of such expences can be paid by the circuit, let it be minuted down, that there may be no after demands on the conference. If only part of it can be paid, let the sum which was judged necessary be specified, with what the circuit allows, that the conference may know how much they have to make up in deficiencies. For want of this equitable plan, I have known persons receive from the conference *and from the circuits*, such sums, as would have been rejected with indignation, in a quarterly meeting. The leaders and stewards would have considered it, down-right swindling. The conference abhors such conduct, but they cannot prevent it, without the assistance of the circuit stewards.

4. There are extraordinary collections to be made through the circuits, on particular occasions. This is necessary when the book is in debt. Let the preachers read to their societies the state of their finances, as drawn up by the circuit stewards, and let them desire the members of the societies to give what they design to subscribe to their leaders, that it may be brought to the next quarter meeting, along with the quarterage. But nothing has created such uneasiness among our people, as collections

tions made for horses. I could relate several things on this subject, which would only wound and grieve our serious friends. To prevent any thing of the same nature in future, let every thing be done openly in this business, that our people may not be imposed upon. If a preacher go into a circuit and want a horse, let a strict enquiry be made, in the following particulars. Have you never had a horse before? If you have not, cannot you buy one for yourself, either with the money you have, or by borrowing a little? Because the horse will be your own, and it is not reasonable that we should pay for him. Besides, all the preachers from the beginning have bought their own horses, if they could either raise or borrow money to do it. Those preachers that could not, their horses have been the property of the connexion; and they could not sell them and pocket the money, without wronging our societies. If you have had a horse before, what have you done with him? You ought to advance the money you have sold him for, and add to it what is necessary to buy another, if you possibly can. If not, the money you receive from the circuit, you should consider as money belonging to the connexion, and if you sell your horse again, you must either return the money to us, or the conference. It is most reasonable that you return it to us.

If a preacher want to change a horse, it may be necessary to ask him how long he has had it? What he sold his last horse for, and what he gave for the one he wishes to part with? Whether he cannot exchange it for a better, and advance the money himself? If he cannot, let the case be fairly stated, and suitable assistance afforded. When a horse is fairly worn out in travelling the circuits, or any accident happens, either to deprive him of life, or of ability for the labours of the circuit, then every thing should be done that the necessity of the case requires. But let no preacher make a collection for himself, or any of his colleagues for him. If a private collection will be sufficient, let the friends be spoken to by the leaders or stewards, and the money that is given be paid into the hands of the circuit stewards, that every thing may be done to the satisfaction of all that are concerned. Let a suitable person be employed to exchange
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or buy a horse, and let the deficiency be made up, if there be any, by the stewards: or if the collection be more than sufficient, let the surplus be given to them. I could relate four or five true narratives, which would justify every step I have recommended. These are so well known in many circuits, that the remembrance of them to this day, is very grievous to our people.

The yearly, Kingswood, and preachers-fund collections, should never come into the hands of any of us, till they are brought to the conference. We should take down what the friends design to subscribe to the yearly collection, and let the leaders receive, and give it to the circuit stewards. The leaders should also receive the Kingswood collection wherever it is made, and let it also be brought to the last quarter meeting, and given to circuit stewards. The stewards and leaders should be desired to speak to such friends as can help to support the worn out preachers, and they should give this also into the hands of the circuits stewards. If the preachers speak to any of their particular friends for this collection, they should immediately lodge what they receive in the hands of the town stewards, that they may take care of it till the quarterly meeting.

5. At the march quarterly meeting, one or two persons should be elected to attend the district meeting. And the lay delegates from the different circuits, should choose one or two of their members to attend the conference. All the collections should be sent to the persons appointed, that they may take them to the conference, and assist in their disbursement.

6. In the quarterly meetings, the state of houses should be particularly considered. If there be any house that ought to be built for the prosperity of the gospel, it will be possible, for the friends that are present, to know how much can be raised towards building—how the money may be borrowed that is deficient,—who will act as trustees and give security for the money that is to be borrowed,—how the interest may be paid—and what assistance the house is likely to give the connexion, in helping to supply the wants of preachers. In these meetings it should also be settled, what advantage on the one hand would arise from dividing a circuit, and on the other, what

what additional expence it would involve the people in. If there are any dissatisfied trustees belonging to any chapel, on account of service in church hours, or the sacrament being administered, the quarterly meeting will be able, either to persuade such men to allow their brethren to have liberty of conscience, or free them from their anxiety, by accepting of their trust, and fully indemnifying them for any monies that were borrowed on their security. It ought to be maintained, as an axiom *that cannot be altered or modified*, that no trustee should have a power to interfere with the spiritual concerns of a society. Nor have any more than an equal voice in these matters, with the rest of his brethren. This should be religiously attended to, that there may be no infringing upon the rights of the consciences of our people. All the houses that are built in future should have trustees appointed on this *very condition*. They should be told, that they shall have the temporal management of the chapel for the good of the preachers and the congregation: But that the spiritual concerns of the house, respecting service in church hours, the Lord's supper, &c. rests solely with a majority of the people: and whenever they are unwilling to grant that liberty to the people, they shall resign their trust, and be perfectly freed from every obligation they laid under, on account of the premises. Every house we have already in the connection, should be settled, as soon as possible, by *this equitable rule*; that no man, or number of men, may take the place of Christ Jesus, and become judges of other men's consciences.

All our chapels that were built by subscription, have been solemnly dedicated to God, for the use of the people. The sole intention of building was, that the people in the places where they are, might meet together to worship God, and be helped forward in their way to heaven. The hours of worship, and other things of this nature, were not determined: nothing was fixed but the doctrines that should be preached. It was impossible for men to determine forty years ago, with any degree of propriety, how the present congregations shall worship God. This was to be settled by the conference and the people. Our chapels are houses of mercy, parti-
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ly erected by the charity of the people, and partly by monies borrowed on the premises. Trustees were appointed to be like guardian angels, to watch over the people for good, and to see that all *their rights are properly maintained*. How can these men, with any degree of justice, step out of their place, and give laws both to the people and the preachers? Is not this usurping authority over God's heritage, and taking the place of Christ before all? If any doctrines contrary to methodism were preached in any chapel, they would have a *right* to interfere. But in other matters they cannot come forward, to prevent a majority of the people from worshipping God as they please, without *sinning against Christ*.

Most of our houses are worth a great deal more money than the debt upon them. They will more than indemnify themselves. This is the case with all the houses which trustees have claimed a right to interfere in. In consequence of this, it will be very easy to relieve those friends in the trust, who are not willing for a majority of the people to determine in the matters that are now agitated in our connexion. Should any refuse to let the charity of subscribers flow in its own channel, for the benefit of the people that worship in any house, will not their conduct sufficiently evince, that they have some other end in view, than the glory of God, and the good of his cause? But as most of our trustees dread the thought of being *unjust to God, and sacrilegious to his people*, they will spurn the thought of preventing any congregation from worshipping as they think is right before the Lord. I have such confidence in many of the trustees in those places where the people wish for the sacrament, that I am persuaded, when they consider the nature and design of their trust, and the solemn rights of the consciences of those that worship in the chapels they have taken under their care, that they would detest the thought of invading the privileges of our societies. They will cease to contend, saying from their heart, the will of the Lord be done. I repeat it again, the quarterly meeting, is a proper place to settle every thing of this nature.—And security can be given to any, that cannot be prevailed on to continue their trust, on the equitable

able plan, of a majority of the people determining in those things which concern their happiness.

7. In district meetings, our temporal matters may be matured, and prepared for the conference. The delegates from the different circuits can read over what was determined at their quarterly meetings; and the united wisdom of preachers and delegates from several circuits, can adjust our matters in such a manner, that the conference will have little to do, but to hear what is proposed, and confirm those things which cannot be finally established without their sanction. In these meetings, the different collections can be noticed, and prepared to be given in at the conference. The deficiencies of all the preachers of the district, or their families, can be properly stated, and the conference have nothing to do but to allow and pay the different sums. All extra bills, occasioned by sickness, or families in distress, can be considered. The wants of supernumary or superannuated preachers or their widows, can be ascertained; and expences of going to the conference or removing families, can be fixed. It is impossible to settle these matters with propriety in the conference. Many pounds are lost to the connexion, for want of proper information on these subjects. The delegates from the circuits would by no means oppress the preachers: every thing necessary for their welfare would be richly administered. At the same time, they would see that the monies collected from a poor and an afflicted people, were not foolishly and sinfully lavished away.

The district meetings would be able to determine, whether one or two delegates from the people, should attend the conference. If our affairs were brought as forward as possible, in the quarterly and district meetings, it would not require the attention of many preachers, or delegates to transact them in the conference. Perhaps for a few years, it would be necessary for two lay delegates from every district to assemble. And if they were to meet a few days before the conference, while the delegates from the preachers are drawing up the rough plan of stationing, they might have every thing in great forwardness, and be able to transact their business in a few days with the conference, when the preachers are met together.

Having

Having brought forward the spiritual and temporal matters of our connexion to the meeting of the conference, let us consider how they may be managed there to the best advantage.

It has been the complaint of many of our brethren, that our conferences have not been conducted with such speed and precision, as the nature of our affairs require. Many of the preachers have been very much wounded in their minds, on account of different things which have happened. Harassed with business, hurt with various uninteresting debates, and having little time for devotion, have caused them to experience great leanness of soul. Many of us have left our conferences with a troubled mind, and have gone to our appointments to mourn and repent before God. It has been several weeks before many of our brethren have obtained the liberty they enjoyed, before they left their circuits to assemble in conference. Perhaps there are few preachers but what feel more or less sorrow of spirit, when they are at liberty to examine their state, after they have been a few weeks from the duties of their special calling. It will be possible, under the direction and blessing of God, to conduct our affairs in future, that none of us shall suffer spiritual loss, but return from our yearly conferences, *in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace*; and enter upon our labours with hearts filled with love to God, and with love to the souls committed to our care.

There are a few things which may be considered as preliminaries, that would, if properly attended to, have a good influence upon our conferences. 1. Let every thing be done that can be devised, in the quarterly and district meetings, to expedite the business of the conference. 2. Let the delegates to draw up the rough plan, have at least four days before the conference, to bring forward their work as complete as possible. The minutes of the different districts may be of singular use to them, when they contain all the information that the united wisdom of the quarterly and district meetings will afford. 3. Let as few preachers attend the conference, as can transact the business of the different circuits. If we consider, how much the work of God suffers in the circuits which are neglected in the time of the conference; and that too many preachers are a great burden to the

friends where the conferences are held, as well as an hinderance to the work, we shall determine, to do every thing in our power to prevent unnecessary persons from attending. 4. Let the preachers that are appointed to attend the conference, be particularly remembered in the prayers of our friends; that God may give them power to withstand every temptation they meet with, and to live holily and righteously before all. If those that assemble in conference, watch unto prayer themselves, while thousands of our people are bearing them on their hearts before the throne of grace, they will not only be able to keep a conscience void of offence in their great work, but will glorify God, in their bodies and spirits, which are his. 5. Let as little time be spent as possible, in going to, returning from, and in the conferences. 6. Accept, *without the least hesitation*, the help of delegates from the districts, that by their means, a good understanding may be established between us and our people, and business forwarded as much as possible. 7. Let days of fasting and prayer be held before we leave our circuits, and not any days spent in these exercises, at the time of the conferences; unless in very critical cases, as we experienced last August.

To make our conferences as expeditious as possible, it might be well to attend to the following particulars. 1. While the deed is filling up, let the preachers be preparing papers to vote for the president and secretary; and both the papers be given in together, that it may be known at once, who are chosen to those offices. 2. Let a committee consider and report—what preachers have died, with short accounts of their characters,—what preachers are to be received into full connexion—who have travelled, three, two, or one year; and the conference have nothing to do but to hear the account read, and correct mistakes, if there be any. 3. Let the minutes of the districts, give an account of the characters of the preachers; and let *those only* be brought forward, who have acted contrary to the rules of our connexion, and whose cases could not be adjusted in the district meetings, but must be heard in the conference. 4. Let the minutes of districts, as far as possible, determine, who shall be superannuated,—who shall be supernumeraries,—who shall be expelled the connexion,—who shall be put
back

back on trial,—who shall continue on trial more than their four years,—and who shall be dismissed for want of abilities for the work, either among those that are on trial, or those that are in full connexion. 5. Let the rough plan of stationing have as few alterations made in it as possible. The committee are supposed to study the general good of the connexion, and to station the preachers where their abilities will suit the circuits, and to prevent as much as possible long removes. After they have laboured for several days to bring forward their work to perfection, no alterations, but those which appear *absolutely necessary*, should be made on any account. 6. After stationing, the large minutes should be read over, if necessary, and all our laws revised, altered, or confirmed, and suitable advice given, that we may conduct ourselves in all things to be of service to our congregations and societies. If the conference would suffer all our rules and laws to be carefully examined, and *thoroughly revised and altered*, as the state of the connexion requires, and fix a time when they should undergo a new examination, this would prevent a great deal of loss of time in future conferences, till the time of examination should return. Perhaps five or seven years would be long enough between the examinations. Because *human laws and rules* may wax old in that time, which could not well be dispensed with before: even laws made at one time, that do not effect the essentials of religion, may require in five or seven years, to be expunged or altered. 7. The preachers, who have travelled their four years, and are acceptable and useful, should be received as soon as possible, by *that mode*, which is considered most agreeable to the word of God, and most profitable to them; that they may be prepared to go to their appointments without delay.

In settling our temporal affairs, we should suffer the lay delegates from the districts to come forward, and to take an active part in all our matters. In a few minutes, the delegates belonging to a district can tell us, what is collected in each of the circuits for the yearly, Kingwood, and preachers-fund charities. The whole sum of each will soon be known, and can be produced at once; being previously prepared by the delegates in their own meeting. 2. Then the deficiencies of the districts can be called

called over, and the minutes of each attended to, as far as possible. As many alterations in the disbursement will unavoidably take place, the delegates and the preachers can fix the monies to be paid, to their mutual satisfaction, and business go rapidly forward. The districts will soon be called over, and if the book room cannot supply what is deficient, the delegates can lay the state of our finances in detail before the different circuits, and they will help us to the utmost of their power. For, when they examine the accounts of our various expenses, and find there is nothing but what is reasonable and just, they will cheerfully come forward to our help.

3. The state of Kings-wood school will require investigation. It will be enquired, cannot the school be removed in to some part of Yorkshire, where provisions are cheaper? Will not fewer masters and servants manage the school? Cannot they keep the school, to board, cloath, wash, and educate every boy for sixteen or eighteen pounds in the year, instead of costing the connexion thirty, as they have done for several years past? If they cannot be supported for fifteen or twenty pounds a year, would it not be better to break up the school, and allow the parents of every boy that sum, from the boys being seven, to their being fourteen years old? which would not only enable them to get them educated according to their station in life, but would put it into the power of all that are frugal and careful, to be able to cloath their children decently through an apprenticeship. Most of our preachers would *infinitely* prefer this plan, to their boys being torn from them at seven years of age, and kept in a place where they can seldom be seen by them. It often happens, that their hearts are so alienated from their parents through this long absence, that they become cold and indifferent in affection to them ever after. If we as a body of preachers cannot manage the school better, the delegates would either put us upon a more excellent plan, or they would do something more effectual: they would publish to the friends, in the different circuits, that the boys belonging to us, *cost near double*, what they would cost at many of the best schools in these nations, and this would ruin the collection.

4. It is supposed by many, that our people have nothing to do with the preachers-fund collection. They

imagine, that we have the *sole right* of managing it, without any interference from any quarter. If our fund had *no help* from the people, this would be the case; but as they subscribe towards its support, they have a right to see that the monies are properly applied. The present mode of disbursement is really curious. Every superannuated preacher is to receive pounds per annum, according to the years he has travelled, whether he want them or not. It was fixed, that no man could rise above thirty pounds a year, but *the wisdom* of some of our brethren was manifest, in *seeking to rise* in pounds to the years we have travelled. A young widow, if her husband has travelled thirty years, is to have thirty pounds per annum for life, whether she continue single, or marry a *saint or a sinner*.

The evils of this plan are many. It will encourage old men, who are not fit for circuits, to travel, or be supernumeraries, to increase their number of years, when they are not fit for the work of their calling. 2. It will put a large sum of money into the hands of preachers and widows, who have fortunes of their own, and have no need of it. 3. It will induce young women to do every thing that lays in their power, to engage old men to marry them, that after their death, they may have the benefit of the fund, and the advantage of *sprightly young husbands*. 4. It will prevent those preachers, who are superannuated in the bloom of their life, *by some accident; or by excessive labours in the vineyard of Christ*, from having a demand for a suitable supply of their real wants from the fund; and may make them mourn before the Lord in the greatest distress; while an *old drone*, that has palmed himself on circuits, who received him as a *scourge from God*, will have abundance to live on, when he is superannuated. 5. Or the widow of such a valuable man as Mr Hodgson, may be distressed by the *iron band of poverty*, because her pious husband, had the misfortune to be drowned, before he had travelled a sufficient number of years, to intitle her to a suitable maintenance. 6. It is a *sacrilegious waste* of money on the one hand, while on the other it exposes valuable men and widows to want. 7. It is a perverting the design of the charity. Many of our people would sooner throw their money into the sea, than give it to this charity, if they knew it was guided

by such unscriptural rules. 8. If Israel could not prosper while Achan was in the camp, *in possession of the golden wedge*, can we expect to prosper, while such *golden rules* direct the disbursement of our monies to aged men and young widows; and such *iron rules* are appointed, to supply the wants of those who are truly objects of charity? See Trueman, and Freeman's letter on this subject.

If lay delegates were to help in the disbursement of this charity, they might pass an act of oblivion on what the preachers have already done, but they would wish to have equitable rules established for our future conduct. Perhaps they would fix one rule, which would satisfy every person, that suffers either reason or religion to have dominion over him. Let the *real wants* of all superannuated preachers or widows, be *the rule* of disbursement forever. And let these wants be ascertained, in the quarterly and district meetings. This was the rule by which we acted, till the year 1791. And unless we return to it again, it would be just in our people, and, *I believe doing God service*, not to subscribe a farthing more to this fund. For while we *whine and cant*, like *begging friers*, to excite compassion in our friends, under a *pretence* of supporting worn out preachers and their widows, and *prostitute their charity* to support rich old men, and the young widows of old men, *what Jesuit ever acted a baser part than we act?* Pardon my warmth on this subject. If *former means* had been effectual, I should not have come forward a second time, to reprove and exhort. It would be wicked to speak on it, as *old Eli reprov'd his sons*.

5. The lay delegates would be singularly useful to the conference, in every thing that relates to building of chapels,—to indemnify disaffected trustees—and whatever relates to the outward prosperity of our cause.

6. Let large minutes of all our proceedings in the conference be printed as soon as possible, and be open to the inspection of all our people. Let them be appointed to be read, in the first quarter meeting after every conference.

7. After these matters are adjusted, and every thing honourably settled, which relates to all our societies, let us bind ourselves afresh to God, at his own table, and after solemn thanksgiving, let us hasten to our different circuits,

circuits, to watch over the souls committed to our care; and to publish the good tidings of salvation, to sinners of every description.

If this, or a similar plan was adopted, I am persuaded, the business of our conferences would be transacted in a few days. They would hardly ever exceed a week. Our people would be perfectly satisfied, and most of the preachers would rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We should experience the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, and the whole connexion would prosper under the direction of the Lord our God.

I have now finished the sketch, which has lately occupied my attention. I have not the vanity to suppose, it is so perfect as it might be. Nor do I imagine, it will meet the approbation of all the brethren. I have the honour to be connected with, in the glorious work of the ministry. God is my witness, that throughout the whole I have studied his glory, the good of our people, and the prosperity of the gospel. I have not wilfully exaggerated any thing: but have suppressed a number of things, that would have illustrated my meaning; which might have been drawn from the examples of different persons employed amongst us. Whether I am esteemed, or despised; considered as a friend or an enemy to methodism, my conscience bears me witness before God, *that none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

If my brethren would but read with candour what I have written, and weigh the different parts of this pamphlet *deliberately in their own minds*, I am persuaded, they would find nothing in it contrary to the scriptures of truth,—nothing contrary to the principles of enlightened reason in their own breast. Prejudice blinds the mind—Bigotry contracts the spirit,—Superstition fires the imagination against the interests of religion,—An unreasonable attachment to *old customs and forms of worship*, leads us to venerate a number of things, that are not founded on the scriptures of truth,—Party spirit, hardens the heart, and leads those that are under its influence, to revile, reproach, and persecute, under a pretence of

of glorifying God, and supporting his truth.—And the “*great Devil intolerance*” would ever be forcing the consciences of all, who cannot be convinced by its arguing. It would even burn at a stake, those who oppose its mandates, and refuse to be subject to its laws. Let these be renounced, and then, my sentiments will have an opportunity of being tried by the law and the testimony, and not by *human creeds and plans*, of even good men’s inventing.

It is easy to see, that quarterly, and district meetings, are every way adequate to the matters necessary to be transacted in any circuit, between the conferences. If our people be only allowed to send their delegates, both to district meetings and to the conference, we shall soon see to our pleasure, the happy fruits of such an equitable measure. But if the best preachers in the connexion were in a district, and the people kept back from having any share in our government, or the management of our affairs, it would be impossible to give them perfect satisfaction. Only let them engage with us in the future steps we take for the prosperity of our cause, and we shall have no complaining in any of our departments.

But would not adopting what this pamphlet recommends, effectually shut out all *bishops, priests, and deacons*, from having a roving commission amongst us? Perhaps this would be the consequence. If it caused several of our *worthy brethren* to hang down their heads like bull-rushes, it would constrain others to sing for joy. Three times, under different forms, did the *bishop plan* make its appearance last conference. It was brought forward and supported by men of the first rate abilities in our connexion: but they had the mortification of seeing it rejected, by a vast majority of the preachers, in full connexion.

It first appeared under the idea of a committee of five, to be called by the *humble name* of a building committee. Their office was to examine any affair like that of Bristol last year, and to determine whether a new chapel should be built or not, in case of a similar division. We had, however, read of the *feigned humility* and power of *popes and bishops*, and prevented their lordships from mounting the scaffold. One would have ascended with his *plumb line and the square*,—another with his *apron and trowel*,—

a third, with a *burden of bricks*,—a fourth with a *hod full of mortar*,—and my lord primate with the *corner stone*, that after he had laid it with the grace of *voluntary humility*, they might all stand above us and our brethren, on the tower they had built, and command our steps, while we moved in a *circle below them*.

When they were defeated in this scheme, after they had breathed a little, they came directly to the point, and wished to have men appointed, to travel through the circuits, *not to interfere with the concerns of the preachers*; but purely for the benefit of our souls, and the souls of others. They were to be the *servants of all*: and only to *do good* by their word and doctrine. One of them preached up the advantages of itineracy; another told us of the sayings of Mr Wesley on this head; while many looked with a *wishful eye* toward the office of a *methodistical apostle*. All was *meekness and humility* in proposal. No titles above their brethren,—No power or influence, but by the gospel,—No honour or reverence, but purely for their works sake,—No revenue but what they should *pick up* among the people, in their *free donations*. But alas! our faith failed us, and we opposed with success, this *bumble primitive plan*. When they were defeated a second time, they endeavoured to quiet themselves, by *believing in hope against hope*, that the time may come, when we shall see into the advantages, and necessity of their plan.

After this defeat, it was some time before their hearts sufficiently revived, to make their last effort. It was however, at length brought forward, with all the art and eloquence of our chief speaker, under the proposal of a committee of three, to be called an executive head, and to be in three parts of the kingdom remote from each other, to *give energy* to our laws. This head of influence, placed upon our body in a triangular form, like a three cocked hat, was to do wonders *to and for us*. The very men were named who might be suitable for this curious head, and every thing proposed which was necessary to put them upon our shoulders. But we *either saw, or supposed we saw*, in one of them the face of a cat, to give us *simple innocent looks*, and do nothing but *blare at us*,—in another the face of an eagle, to *pluck out our eyes*, and then *soar a vast height above us*,—and in the third the face
of

of a lion, to frighten us by his roaring, or to break us in pieces, if we could not make our escape, by his unmerciful teeth. This led us again to reject the humble proposals of our venerable fathers and brethren; and being the same majority as before, we easily prevailed. Here ends the chapter of bishops.

It is generally supposed, where undue power is once grasped by any man, or number of men, it will never be given up, but by compulsion. Let us convince the world, that it is *even possible* for four or five hundred ministers of Christ, to give up any power that we possess, which in the least militates against the happiness of our people. If this should be done of *our own free will*, without any constraint from them, it would be to the honour of our characters, and to the advantage of our connexion. But, while we complain of the undue influence of many trustees, should we refuse to give up any power or privileges which belong to our people, we shall convince them, *we are not seeking their welfare*, but are desirous of holding fast every thing we have already attained, and only wish for the trustees to resign their power, *that we may be put into the peaceable possession*, of as great a part of it, as we can obtain. If we set the trustees a good example, in cheerfully giving up what we at present hold fast, which belongs to our societies, many of them will consider it their duty, to tread in our steps. But if we endeavour to obtain the power and influence which they possess, without stretching out our hands to remove those things which justly constrain them, and our leaders, stewards, &c, to complain, they will consider us as acting a *sanctimonious hypocritical part*, and will sooner follow our example than our advice, in these matters.

Many things which this pamphlet recommends are already attended to, by our preachers in general. Most of our brethren will find no difficulty in freely giving up any thing which appears necessary to be parted with, for the benefit of our people. It is the *sincere desire* and the *earnest prayer* of many respectable preachers, that every grievance may be speedily redressed, that we may labour with abundant success, to the satisfaction of our societies and congregations. If a few men violently oppose any alteration in our plan, on the subjects we have considered, it is to be feared, they have *some gain or undue influence*.

connected with their godliness. If we suffer their clamours and cries to prevail, we shall expose ourselves to the just indignation, of thousands of our best friends. But if we determine to let every thing be fixed upon its proper foundation, the God of glory will protect and bless us. We shall go on prosperously, and great grace will rest upon us.

As we profess that Christ is the supreme head of the church, and that we should only own him for our master, in matters of a religious nature, let us take his revealed will for the rule of our conduct, and determine in every thing to conform to it. When our doctrines and discipline exactly agree with the living oracles of God, we shall walk in the light as he is in it; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, shall cleanse us from all sin.

May such a glorious change be wrought in all our hearts, by the influences of the Spirit of God, that we may be subject to Christ our living head in all things! May we all speak the same thing, that there may be no schisms among us, but that we may be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment! May we preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from above, and see of the travels of our Redeemer's soul and be satisfied! May we constantly glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are Gods; and as a people, testify to all the world, that we have not believed in vain! May the Lord guide us by his counsel and afterwards receive us to glory! Amen and Amen.

N. B. In our late conference Mr M—— reprobated the idea of our methodistical government being revolutionary. He said our rules *must be fixed*, and *strictly attended to*: otherwise our people will place no confidence in us. One of the rules of pacification runs thus. "No pamphlet or printed letter shall be circulated among us, without the author's name, *and the postage or carriage paid.*" The above rule had not been made a month, before Mr M——'s name and two others, appeared at a printed letter, which was circulated *without the postage being paid.* How easy it is to make rules, and to forget in

a fortnight, that ⁶⁰ ~~four~~ rules exist! May our worthy
 friends be blessed with a better memory in future! It is
 to be feared, that our government is not so perfect as
 ought to be, and therefore must have a few more revolu-
 tions before it is fully established.

THE END.



ERRATA.

I should be thankful, if the reader would be
 kind enough to correct the following, (or
 any other) mistakes; which were chiefly
 occasioned, by being at a distance from the
 press, when the last proof-sheets were exa-
 mined.

Page line

7	-	34	for extremely	-	read extremely
9	-	16	for excepted	-	read accepted.
12	-	4	for withheld	-	read with-held.
13	-	43	for become	-	read became.
14	-	6	alter many letters,	-	add were.
15	-	27	for son	-	read sun.
16	-	34	for amendations	-	read amendments.
25	-	30	for wonderings	-	read wanderings
32	-	26	for on	-	read of.
46	-	22	for rests	-	read rest.

